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January 31, 2003

Honorable Michael Powell  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Triennial Review of the FCC's Policies on Voice-Telephony and High Speed Data Deployment

CC Docket #s: 01-338, 56-98 and 98-147, In The Matter of the Section 251 Unbundling Obligations on Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers; Implementations of The Local Competition Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; and Deployment of Wireline Services offering Advanced Telecommunications Capability

Dear Chairman Powell:

On behalf of the network of minority aging organizations, we are writing to you to support the Commission's efforts to overhaul our nation's policies governing the pricing, competitive roll-out, affordability, and accessibility of basic and advanced telecommunications services. Our network, the Voices for the Minority Elderly (VME) represents consumer voices of the aged minority nationwide, including: Hispanics, American Indian and Alaska Natives, Asian and Pacific Asian and African Americans. It is within ~~this~~ context that we urge you to overhaul our nation's policies so as to ensure that the "public interest" benefits from improvements in the system in the delivery of these services.

We believe that reduced federal regulation will mean that consumers can take better advantage of new technology and that more services will be available. In addition, schools, hospitals, libraries and CSC (Community Service Centers) will have more widespread and affordable access to video and data links. National non-profits including our VME members - National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCoA) and the National Indian Council on Aging (NICoA) - will have

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Page 2.

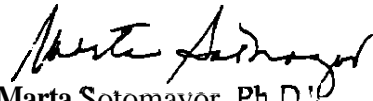
The “meltdown” of the country’s telecommunications sector since Year 2000 and developments in the marketplace since the time of the FCC’s last review, confirm that significant course corrections are necessary to the pricing rules for these services, the UNE (Unbundling Network Elements) rules. If the Telecommunications Act of 1996 is to achieve its core objective of promoting real and sustainable facilities-based competition in all segments of the communications marketplace – dial-up (AOL, MSN), broadband (DSL), local and long-distance, voice, data and video – the FCC must adopt meaningful limits to unbundling.

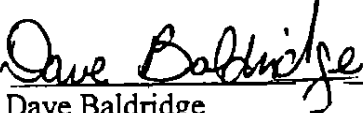
Specifically, the VME supports:

- Changes to the rules governing the rapidly growing high-speed Internet access market that would spur investment by facility-based competitors, accelerating the roll-out of competitively priced advanced services such as telemedicine and distance learning;
- Freeing new Bell phone and ~~data~~ lines from regulation which might result in more investment by other competitive carriers in their own **infrastructure** and buying additional equipment, thus **spurring** job(s) creation; and,
- Review of other alternative “competitive models” that can jump-start **an** “anemic” market for the ubiquitous use of advanced telecommunications services.

We urge the Commission to act now and ensure that our nation’s consumers derive immediate benefits from these changes.

Sincerely,

  
Marta Sotomayor, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
NHCoA

  
Dave Baldrige  
Executive Director  
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